

## ***The People's Plan Forum: a brief introduction***

MUTO Ichiyo

*The People's Plan Forum* is an action-oriented intellectual journal published every other month by the Tokyo-based People's Plan Study Group (PPSG). The journal, as well as the PPCG itself, intends to generate and stimulate intellectual discussion on the important social, political, and theoretical issues of the times, with a view to helping envision and implement alternative social, economic, and cultural systems that will eventually take over global capitalism with all its destructive consequences. PPCG has Muto Ichiyo and Hanasaki Kohei as co-presidents. As its title suggests, PPCG was conceived and came into being broadly in the spirit of the People's Plan 21 process, the networking and alliance building process that was launched in 1989 in Japan and then spread through Asia and beyond toward global transborder participatory democracy engendered by people's alliances.

After a one-year preparatory process, PPCG was formally started in June 1998 as a new network of social movement activists and progressive academics for the purpose of reactivating productive interaction between them — the interaction almost lost for some time after the decline of the once dominant Marxist influences. It was keenly felt that while social movement had become increasingly issue-oriented, academics, whatever the origins and implications of their discourses, tended to distance themselves from movement involvement, thus deepening the discursive chasm. PPCG has, among its 250 members, activists from various fields and about the same number of academics, writers, and professional researchers. *The People's Plan Forum* serves as the arena of the required interaction.

PPSG currently has three working groups: (1) on social movement, (2) postwar Japanese movement thoughts, and (2) globalization and people's transborder alliances. A fourth is now in formation and will cover alternative systems, with a particular focus on community currency. PPCG has so far been emphasizing the evaluation of the postwar social movements in Japan and beyond in the belief that, without drawing lessons from what has been done, it would be difficult to map out the future. The new working group on globalization and people's transborder alliance not only studies and evaluates the ongoing globalization process and its consequences but also, and more importantly, how effectively people's movements, NGOs, and other agencies can emerge as viable global people's forces to counter and overcome the neo-liberal globalization regime.

PPSG is not only a research institute, but positively commits itself to the major socio-political and ideological issues of Japan today, fighting the growing rightist trends of this country. It has been holding regular public forums and symposia, and 'round-table' forums. Together with other Japanese and international groups, it organized the Okinawa International Forum on People's Security, to counter the July 2000 G7 summit in Okinawa. PPCG is in close touch with critical researchers and activists overseas, inviting some of them to come and join its forums as speakers and discussants. PPCG is also a partner of the IACS journal.

*The People's Plan Forum*, as PPCG's journal, has carried the products of those PPCG activities. The titles of past *People's Plan Forum* special issues may give a glimpse into our

areas of concern (including the preliminary issues published in the preparatory stage):

- Is it not premature for us to talk about post-colonialism?
- Re-examining our views of history
- Democracy going beyond borders — theories and practices
- Alternative political and economic systems
- Our 'third choice' — for security without military, well-being without GDP growth
- Toward the building of alternative socio-economic systems
- Pervading sense of insecurity and social solidarity
- What is happening to the Japanese state?
- People's security, not state security
- War responsibility and how it should be assumed — igniting discussion on the ethics, positions, movement, and subjectivities involved
- Opting for a world without military bases and the military — report on the Okinawa International Forum for People's Security
- Localities and local autonomy
- Thinking about East Asia as the arena where we are based
- Casting a new light on the issue of the revision of the Constitution
- Something horrible is happening to our employment and work
- Feminism today, where it stands

Each issue contains an editorial, three or four main analytical articles, interviews, 'round-table' discussion reports, reports on new initiatives in social movements, book reviews, evaluation of movement thoughts, regular columns, a PPSG activity report, and translated overseas articles. The contributors are largely from PPSG members but also from outside the group. *People's Plan Forum* (PPF) is distributed basically on a subscription basis, but its circulation ranges from 600 to 1000 depending on the subject taken up. PPSG is now planning to re-launch PPF for bookstore sale through regular distributors. PPF articles are all in Japanese, but every issue carries an annotated English table of contents, which are available from the PPSG website (<http://www.jca.apc.org/ppsg/main.html>). Inquiries about PPF and PPSG are to be sent to [ppsg@jca.apc.org](mailto:ppsg@jca.apc.org). The PPSG office is located at Sunrise Shinjuku 3F, 2-4-15 Okubo, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 169-0072 (Tel/Fax + 81 3 5273 8362).

### Author's biography

MUTO Ichiyo 武藤一羊 is currently a member of the editorial board of *The People's Plan Forum* (ピープルズプラン研究) and the co-president of the People's Plan Study Group in Tokyo.

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